

Chuck Hutching's Testimony HB5277

My name is Chuck Hutchings, and I live in Unionville. I have had cerebral palsy all my life, have a speech disability, and use a wheelchair. In addition, over the past few years, I have had multiple health issues, including developing lupus, aspirating, being catheterized, and experiencing two broken lumbar vertebrae.

All these health conditions have resulted in my having multiple x-rays and MRI's. Frequently, it has been very hard to get on the table. At my last x-ray in November, 2021, there was no lift in the room, and the table did not adjust. I am a large, tall man, and four people had to lift me over to the table on a sheet, which was painful and scary.

Even when there is a lift, it doesn't always work for me. Because my legs don't bend, I need a Hoyer lift, not a Serra. When I try to tell medical personnel what my needs are and what doesn't work, they do not take the time to listen because of my severe speech disability. One time, some medical attendants tried to force my legs into the Serra lift and injured my heel in the process. Medical facilities need to be prepared for the diverse needs of people with disabilities, and the staff needs to be trained to listen and respect what the patient tells them.

To fix my broken vertebrae, the doctors inserted a tube in my back and poured in a kind of cement. This was an outpatient procedure, and my friend Carmen gave me a ride to the hospital in my wheelchair. When we got there, 4 medical personnel came out to Carmen's van and transferred me on to a very rickety stretcher. Getting me out of my wheelchair and on to the stretcher was scary. At the end of the procedure, I was brought back to the van and transferred into my wheelchair in the same way.

During the cementing procedure, I was transferred from the stretcher to a very small, narrow table. I don't have spasms very

often, but if I had gone into spasm, I could easily have fallen off. In addition, as soon as I was transferred to the table, the medical attendants tried to turn me over from my back to my stomach. This was very difficult and scary to accomplish on such a narrow table. They wanted me to put my arms out straight over my head, but one of my arms is permanently bent, so it had to remain under me for the entire 3 hour procedure.

Although I know that HB 5277 is focusing on medical equipment, I have to say a word about the accessibility of doctor's offices. I have to go to the pulmonologist for check-ups on a regular basis, and his office is not set up to accommodate a large wheelchair such as mine. The doorways are very narrow, and the examining room is so small that I have to back my wheelchair into it. There are obstacles such as chairs and stools, so I frequently steer my chair into the examining table by mistake. I would argue that not only the medical diagnostic equipment needs to be accessible; the office space does as well.

Thank you very much for considering my testimony.